

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 01623 101025Z

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /031 W
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1188

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 1623

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, US

SUBJ: PRESIDENT FORD'S MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT ASAD

REF: STATE 174031

1. PRESIDENT FORD'S MESSAGE DELIVERED EVENING AUGUST 9 AT APPROXIMATELY 2130 LOCAL TIME TO PRESIDENTIAL PRESS ADVISER ELIAS WHO WAS NOT ONLY OBVIOUSLY PLEASED WITH MESSAGE BUT SURPRISED AT THE RAPIDITY WITH WHICH NEW PRESIDENT TAKING CONTROL OF FOREIGN POLICY. IN DISCUSSION WHICH ENSUED ELIAS EXPRESSED HOPE THAT PRESIDENT FORD AS HE STATED IN HIS LETTER TO PRESIDENT ASAD WOULD IN FACT CONTINUE AMERICA'S CURRENT POLICY TOWARD ARABS BECAUSE "ARAB AND HARTICULARLY SYRIANS HAVE OVER THE LAST FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS BEGUN TO SEE SOME CHANGE THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WILL UNDERSTAND OUR POSITION." I ASSURED HIM THAT PRESIDENT FORD WOULD CONTINUE POLICIES OF HIS PREDECESSOR, PRESIDENT NIXON, AND THAT HE WOBTD PROCEED WITH AN OPEN MIND TOWARDS A JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN THE AREA CONSONANT ALWAYS WITH THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES AS WELL AS WITH THE INTERESTS OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA.

2. COMMENT: MAY I ALSO COMMEND DEPARTMENT FOR GETTING THIS MESSAGE OUT SO QUICKLY AFTER PRESIDENT FORD'S SWEARING IN. IT MADE AN OBVIOUS IMPACT. IN THIS REGARD I WOULD LIKE TO RECOMMEND AS A FOLLOW-UP, IF PRESIDENT FORD'S
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SCHEDULE PERMITS THAT HE GIVE A LITTLE EXTRA TIME TO

AMBASSADOR KABBANI WHEN THE LATTER PRESENTS HIS CREDENTIALS. I BELIEVE THAT KABBANI WILL BE THE FIRST ARAB AMBASSADOR WHOSE CREDENTIALS THE PRESIDENT WILL BE RECEIVING SINCE MOVING INTO THE WHITE HOUSE. IN ADDITION, HE IS, OF COURSE, THE FIRST SYRIAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON IN SEVEN YEARS AND THE SYRIANS REMEMBER THE EXTRA ATTENTION WHICH PRESIDENT NIXON GAVE TO EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR GHORBAL WHEN THE LATTER PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS A FEW MONTHS AGO AFTER A SIMILAR LAPSE OF TIME.
SCOTES

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, FOREIGN RELATIONS, CREDENTIALS PRESENTATION, DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974DAMASC01623
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740219-1062
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740858/aaaabxkd.tel
Line Count: 71
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: STATE 174031
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 AUG 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <21 FEB 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT FORD'S MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT ASAD
TAGS: PFOR, SY, US, (ASAD, HAFIZ), (FORD, GERALD R), (KABBANI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005